

Gentz laughed. "Indeed, he is right," he exclaimed; "that is the end of wedded life. But, thank God, mine is over, and, I swear by all my hopes, never will I be such a fool as to marry again! I shall remain a bachelor as long as I live; for he who belongs to no woman owns all women. It is time, however, to think of to-night's banquet. But in order to give a banquet, I must first procure new furniture for my rooms, and this time I won't have any but beautiful and costly furniture. And how shall I get it? Ah, *parbleu*, I forgot the six hundred dollars I received from the minister. I shall buy furniture for that sum. No, that would be very foolish, inasmuch as I greatly need it for other purposes. The furniture dealers, I have no doubt, will willingly trust me, for I never yet purchased any thing of them. Unfortunately, I cannot say so much in regard to him who is to furnish me the wines and delicacies for the supper, and I have only one hundred dollars in my pocket. The other five hundred dollars I must send to that bloodsucker, that heartless creditor Werner. But must I do so? Ah! really, I believe it would be rank folly. The fellow would think he had frightened me, and as soon as I should owe him another bill, he would again besiege my door, and raise a fresh disturbance here. No; I will show him that I am not afraid of him, and that his impudent conduct deserves punishment. Oh, John! John!"

The door was opened immediately, and the footman entered.

"John," said Gentz, gravely, "go at once to Mr. Werner. Tell him some friends are coming to see me to-night. I therefore want him to send me this evening twenty-four bottles of champagne, three large *pâtés de foie gras*, two hundred oysters, and whatever is necessary for a supper. If he should fill my order promptly and carefully, he can send me to-morrow a receipt for two hundred dollars, and I will pay him the money. But if a single oyster should be bad; if a single bottle of champagne should prove of poor quality, or if he should dare to decline furnishing me with the supper, he will not get a single *groschen*. Go and tell him that, and be back as soon as possible."

"Meantime, I will write a few invitations," said Gentz, as soon as he was alone. "But I shall invite none but unmarried men. In the first place, the Austrian minister, Prince von Reuss. This gentleman contents himself with one mistress, and as he fortunately does not suspect that the beautiful Marianne Meier is at the same time *my* mistress, he is a great friend of mine. Yes, if he knew that—ah!" he interrupted himself, laughing, "that would be another illustration of La Fontaine's fable of the two cocks and the hen. Well, I will now write the invitations."

He had just finished the last note when the door opened, and John entered, perfectly out of breath.

"Well, did you see Mr. Werner?" asked Gentz, folding the last note.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Werner sends word that he will furnish the supper promptly and satisfactorily, and will deliver here to-night twenty-four bottles of his best champagne, three large *pâtés de foie gras*, two hundred oysters, etc., but only on one condition."

"What! the fellow actually dares to impose conditions?" exclaimed Gentz, indignantly. "What is it he asks?"

"He asks you, sir, when he has delivered every thing you have ordered, and before going to supper, to be kind enough to step out for a moment into the anteroom, where Mr. Werner will wait for you in order to receive there his two hundred dollars. I am to notify him if you accept this condition, and if so, he will furnish the supper."

"Ah, that is driving me to the wall," exclaimed Gentz, laughing. "Well, go back, to the shrewd fellow and tell him that I accept his conditions. He is to await me in the anteroom, and as he would, of course, make a tremendous noise in case I should disappoint him, he may be sure that I shall come. So go to him, John."

"As for myself," said Gentz, putting on his cloak, "I shall go and purchase several thousand dollars' worth of furniture; my rooms shall hereafter be as gorgeous as those of a prince. By the by, I believe I have been too generous. If I had offered Werner one hundred dollars, he would have contented himself with that sum."

CHAPTER XV.

THE WEDDING.

At the house of the wealthy banker Itzig a rare festival took place to-day, a festival which all Berlin had been talking of for the last few days, and which had formed the topic of conversation, no less among the people on the streets, than among the aristocratic classes in their palatial mansions. To-day the wedding of three of his beautiful young daughters was to take place, and the rich, ostentatious, and generous gentleman had left nothing undone in order to celebrate this gala-day in as brilliant and imposing a manner as possible. All the manufacturers of Berlin had been employed for months to get up the *trousseaux* of his daughters, for he had declared that they should wear exclusively the productions of German

industry, and that not a single piece of their new household goods should be of French manufacture. Hence, all the gorgeous brocades, velvets, and laces for their dresses and furniture had been woven in Berlin manufactories; the most magnificent linen had been ordered from Silesia, and a host of milliners and seamstresses had got up every thing required for the wardrobe of the young ladies, in the most skilful and artistic manner. Even the plate and costly jewelry had been manufactured by Berlin jewellers, and the rich and exquisitely painted china had been purchased at the royal *Porzellan-fabrik*. These three *trousseaux*, so beautiful and expensive, had been, as it were, a triumph of home art and home industry, and for this reason they excited general attention. Herr Itzig had finally, though very reluctantly, yielded to the urgent entreaties of his friends and admitted the public to the rooms and halls of his house in which the *trousseaux* of his daughters were displayed. However, in order not to lay himself open to the charge of boastful ostentation, he had tried to impart a useful and charitable character to this exhibition. He had fixed a tablet over the entrance to those rooms, bearing the inscription of "Exhibition of Productions of Home Industry;" in addition, every visitor had to buy a ticket of admission for a few *groschen*, the proceeds to be distributed among the poor.

Every one hastened to the banker's house in order to admire the "productions of home industry." Even the queen had come with one of her ladies of honor to inspect the gorgeous display, and while admiring the magnificence of the silks and velvets and the artistic setting of the diamonds, she had exclaimed joyfully: "How glad I am to see that Germany is really able to do entirely without France, and to satisfy all her wants from her own resources!"

The queen had uttered these words perhaps on the spur of the moment, but the public imparted to them a peculiar meaning and tendency; and the newspapers, the organs of public opinion, never tired of praising the royal words, and of admonishing the inhabitants of Berlin to visit the patriotic exhibition at the banker's house. Curiosity, moreover, stimulated the zeal of the ladies, while political feeling caused the male part of the population to appear at the exhibition. But when it became known that the French embassy had taken umbrage at the zeal manifested by the people of Berlin, and that the French minister had even dared at the royal table to complain loudly and bitterly of the words uttered by the queen in Herr Itzig's house, the indignation became general, and the visits to the exhibition assumed the character of a national demonstration against the overbearing French. Hosts of spectators now hastened to Herr Itzig's house, and gay, mischievous young men took

pleasure in stationing themselves in groups in the street on which the French minister was living, right in front of the house, in order to converse loudly in the French language about the rare attractions of the banker's exhibition, and to praise the noble patriot who disdained to buy abroad what he could get at home just as well, if not better.

The success of his exhibition, however, far exceeded the wishes of the banker, and he was glad when the days during which the exhibition was to continue were at an end, so that he could exclude the inquisitive visitors from his house.

But to-day the house was to be opened to the invited guests, for to-day, as we stated before, Herr Itzig was going to celebrate simultaneously the wedding of three of his beautiful daughters, and the whole place was astir with preparations for a becoming observance of the gala-day.

While the footmen and other servants, under the direction of skilful artists, were engaged in gorgeously decorating the parlors and halls; while a hundred busy hands in the kitchen and cellar were preparing a sumptuous repast; while Herr Itzig and wife were giving the last directions for the details of the festival, the three brides were chatting confidentially in their own room. All of them were quite young yet, the eldest sister having scarcely completed her twenty-first year. They were very beautiful, and theirs was the striking and energetic beauty peculiar to the women of the Orient—that beauty of flaming black eyes, glossy black hair, a glowing olive complexion, and slender but well-developed forms. They wore a full bridal costume; their bare, beautifully rounded arms and necks were gorgeously adorned with diamonds and other precious stones; their tall and vigorous figures were clad in white silk dresses, trimmed with superb laces. He who would have seen them thus in the full charm of beauty, grace, and youth, in their magnificent costumes, and with delicate myrtle-crowns on their heads, would have believed he beheld three favorite daughters of Fate, who had never known care and grief, and upon whose heads happiness had poured down an uninterrupted sunshine.

Perhaps it was so; perhaps it was only the beautiful myrtle-crowns that cast a shadow over the faces of the three brides, and not their secret thoughts—their silent wishes.

They had eagerly conversed for a while, but now, however, they paused and seemed deeply absorbed. Finally, one of them slowly raised her glowing black eyes and cast a piercing glance upon her sisters. They felt the magic influence of this glance, and raised their eyes at the same time.

"Why do you look at us so intently, Fanny?" they asked.

"I want to see if I can read truth on your brow," said Fanny; "or if the diamonds and the myrtle-crowns conceal every thing. Girls, suppose we take off for a moment the shining but lying masks with which we adorn ourselves in the eyes of the world, and show to each other our true and natural character? We have always lied to each other. We said mutually to each other: 'I am happy. I am not jealous of you, for I am just as happy as you.' Suppose we now open our lips really and tell the truth about our hearts? Would not it be novel and original? Would it not be an excellent way of whiling away these few minutes until our betrothed come and lead us to the altar? See, this is the last time that we shall be thus together—the last time that we bear the name of our father; let us, therefore, for once tell each other our true sentiments. Shall we do so?"

"Yes," exclaimed the two sisters. "But about what do you want us to tell you the truth?"

"About our hearts," replied Fanny, gravely. "Esther, you are the eldest of us three. You must commence. Tell us, therefore, if you love your betrothed, Herr Ephraim?"

Esther looked at her in amazement. "If I love him?" she asked. "Good Heaven! how should I happen to love him? I scarcely know him. Father selected him for me; it is a brilliant match; I shall remain in Berlin; I shall give splendid parties and by my magnificent style of living greatly annoy those ladies of the so-called *haute volée*, who have sometimes dared to turn up their noses at the 'Jewesses.' Whether I shall be able to love Ephraim, I do not know; but we shall live in brilliant style, and as we shall give magnificent dinner-parties, we shall never lack guests from the most refined classes of society. Such are the prospects of my future, and although I cannot say that I am content with them, yet I know that others will deem my position a most enviable one, and that is at least something."

"The first confession!" said Fanny, smiling. "Now it is your turn, Lydia. Tell us, therefore, do you love Baron von Eskeles, your future husband?"

Lydia looked at her silently and sadly. "Do not ask me," she said, "for you and Esther know very well that I do not love him. I once had a splendid dream. I beheld myself an adored wife by the side of a young man whom I loved and who loved me passionately. He was an artist, and when he was sitting at his easel, he felt that he was rich and happy, even without money, for he had his genius and his art. When I was looking at his paintings, and at the handsome and inspired artist himself, it seemed to me there was but one road to happiness on earth: to belong to that man, to love him, to

serve him, and, if it must be, to suffer and starve with him. It was a dream, and father aroused me from it by telling me that I was to marry Baron von Eskeles, that he had already made an agreement with the baron's father, and that the wedding would take place in two weeks."

"Poor Lydia!" murmured the sisters.

A pause ensued. "Well," asked Esther, "and you, Fanny? You examine us and say nothing about yourself. What about your heart, my child? Do you love your betrothed, Baron von Arnstein, the partner of Eskeles, your future brother-in-law? You are silent! Have you nothing to say to us?"

"I have to say to you that we are all to be pitied and very unhappy," said Fanny, passionately. "Yes, to be pitied and very unhappy, notwithstanding our wealth, our diamonds, and our brilliant future! We have been sold like goods; no one has cared about the hearts which these goods happen to have, but every one merely took into consideration how much profit he would derive from them. Oh, my sisters, we rich Jewesses are treated just in the same manner as the poor princesses; we are sold to the highest bidder. And we have not got the necessary firmness, energy, and independence to emancipate ourselves from this degrading traffic in flesh and blood. We bow our heads and obey, and, in the place of love and happiness, we fill our hearts with pride and ostentation, and yet we are starving and pining away in the midst of our riches."

"Yes," sighed Lydia, "and we dare not even complain! Doomed to eternal falsehood, we must feign a happiness we do not experience, and a love we do not feel."

"I shall not do so!" exclaimed Fanny, proudly. "It is enough for me to submit to compulsion, and to bow my head; but never shall I stoop so low as to lie."

"What! you are going to tell your husband that you do not love him?" asked the sisters.

"I shall not say that to my *husband*, but to my *betrothed* as soon as he makes his appearance."

"But suppose he does not want to marry a girl who does not love him?"

"Then he is the one who breaks off the match, not I, and father cannot blame me for it. But do you not hear footsteps in the hall? It is my betrothed. I begged him to be here a quarter of an hour previous to the commencement of the ceremony, because I desired to speak to him about a very serious matter. He is coming. Now pray go to the parlor, and wait for me there. I shall rejoin you, perhaps alone, and in that case I shall be free; perhaps, however, Arnstein will accompany me, and in that eventuality he will have

accepted the future as I am going to offer it to him. Farewell, sisters; may God protect us all."

"May God protect *you!*" said Lydia, tenderly embracing her sister. "You have a courageous and strong soul, and I wish mine were like yours."

"Would that save you, Lydia?" asked Fanny, sharply. "Courage and energy are of no avail in our case; in spite of our resistance, we should have to submit and to suffer. He is coming."

She pushed her sisters gently toward the parlor door, and then went to meet her betrothed, who had just entered.

"Mr. Arnstein," said Fanny, giving him her hand, "I thank you for complying so promptly with my request."

"A business man is always prompt," said the young baron, with a polite bow.

"Ah, and you treat this interview with me likewise as a business affair?"

"Yes, but as a business affair of the rarest and most exquisite character. A conference with a charming young lady is worth more than a conference with the wealthiest business friend, even if the interview with the latter should yield a profit of one hundred per cent."

"Ah, I believe you want to flatter me," said Fanny, closely scanning the small and slender figure and the pale face of the baron.

He bowed with a gentle smile, but did not raise his eyes toward her. Fanny could not help perceiving that his brow was slightly clouded.

"Baron," she said, "I have begged you to come and see me, because I do not want to go to the altar with a lie on my soul. I will not deceive God and yourself, and therefore I now tell you, frankly and sincerely, I do not love you, baron; only my father's will gives my hand to you!"

There was no perceptible change in the young baron's face. He seemed neither surprised nor offended.

"Do you love another man?" he asked quietly.

"No, I love no one!" exclaimed Fanny.

"Ah, then, you are fortunate indeed," he said, gloomily. "It is by far easier to marry with a cold heart, than to do so with a broken one; for the cold heart may grow warm, but the broken one never."

Fanny's eyes were fixed steadfastly on his features.

"Mr. Arnstein," she exclaimed, impetuously, "you do not love me either!"

He forced himself to smile. "Who could see you—you, the proud, glorious beauty—without falling in love with you?" he exclaimed, emphatically.

"Pray, no empty flatteries," said Fanny, impatiently. "Oh, tell me the truth! I am sure you do not love me!"

"I saw you too late," he said, mournfully; "if I had known you sooner, I should have loved you passionately."

"But now I am too late—and have you already loved another?" she asked, hastily.

"Yes, I love another," he said, gravely and solemnly. "As you ask me, I ought to tell you the truth. I love another."

"Nevertheless, you want to marry me?" she exclaimed, angrily.

"And you?" he asked, gently. "Do you love me?"

"But I told you already my heart is free. I love no one, while you—why don't you marry her whom you love?"

"Because I cannot marry her."

"Why cannot you marry her?"

"Because my father is opposed to it. He is the chief of our house and family. He commands, and we obey. He is opposed to it because the young lady whom I love is poor. She would not increase the capital of our firm."

"Oh, eternally, eternally that cold mammon, that idol to whom our hearts are sacrificed so ruthlessly!" exclaimed Fanny, indignantly. "For money we sell our youth, our happiness, and our love."

"I have not sold my love. I have sacrificed it," said Baron Arnstein, gravely; "I have sacrificed it to the interests of our firm. But in seeing you so charming and sublime in your loveliness and glowing indignation, I am fully satisfied already that I am no longer to be pitied, for I shall have the most beautiful and generous wife in all Vienna."

"Then you really want to marry me? You will not break off the match, although your heart belongs to another woman, and although you know that I do not love you?"

"My beautiful betrothed, let us not deceive each other," he said, smiling; "it is not a marriage, but a partnership we are going to conclude in obedience to the wishes of our fathers. In agreeing upon this partnership only our fortunes, but not our hearts, were thought of. The houses of Itzig, Arnstein, and Eskeles will flourish more than ever; whether the individuals belonging to these houses will wither is of no importance. Let us therefore submit to our fate, my dear, for we cannot escape from it. Would it be conducive to your happiness if I should break off the match? Your father would probably select another husband for you, perhaps in Poland or in Russia, and you would be buried with all the treasures of your beauty and accomplishments in some obscure corner of the world, while I shall take you to Vienna, to the great theatre of the world

—upon a stage where you will at least not lack triumphs and homage. And I? Why should I be such a stupid fool as to give you up—you who bring to me much more than I deserve—your beauty, your accomplishments, and your generous heart? Ah, I shall be the target of general envy, for there is no lady in Vienna worthy of being compared with you. As I cannot possess her whom I love, I may thank God that my father has selected you for me. You alone are to be pitied, Fanny, for I cannot offer you any compensation for the sacrifices you are about to make in my favor. I am unworthy of you; you are my superior in beauty, intellect, and education. I am a business man, that is all. But in return I have at least something to give—wealth, splendor, and a name that has a good sound, even at the imperial court. Let me, then, advise you as a friend to accept my hand—it is the hand of a friend who, during his whole life, will honestly strive to compensate you for not being able to give his love to you and to secure your happiness.”

He feelingly extended his hand to her, and the young lady slowly laid hers upon it.

“Be it so!” she said, solemnly; “I accept your hand and am ready to follow you. We shall not be a pair of happy lovers, but two good and sincere friends.”

“That is all I ask,” said Arnstien, gently. “Never shall I molest you with pretensions and demands that might offend your delicacy and be repugnant to your heart; never shall I ask more of you than what I hope I shall be able to deserve—your esteem and your confidence. Never shall I entertain the infatuated pretensions of a husband demanding from his wife an affection and fidelity he is himself unable to offer her. In the eyes of the world we shall be man and wife; but in the interior of your house you will find liberty and independence. There you will be able to gratify all your whims and wishes; there every one will bow to you and obey you. First of all, I shall do so myself. You shall be the pride, the glory and joy of my house, and secure to it a brilliant position in society. We shall live in princely style, and you shall rule as a queen in my house. Will that satisfy you? Do you accept my proposition?”

“Yes, I accept it,” exclaimed Fanny, with radiant eyes, “and I assure you no other house in Vienna shall equal ours. We will make it a centre of the best society, and in the midst of this circle which is to embrace the most eminent representatives of beauty, intellect, and distinction, we will forget that we are united without happiness and without love.”

“But there will be a day when your heart will love,” said Arnstien. “Swear to me that you will not curse me on that day because I shall then stand between you and your love. Swear to me that

you will always regard me as your friend, that you will have confidence in me, and tell me when that unhappy and yet so happy hour will strike, when your heart begins to speak.”

“I swear it to you!” said Fanny, gravely. “We will always be sincere toward each other. Thus we shall always be able to avert wretchedness, although it may not be in our power to secure happiness. And now, my friend, come, give me your arm and accompany me to the parlor where they are already waiting for us. Now, I shall no longer weep and mourn over this day, for it has given to me a friend, a brother!”

She took his arm and went with him to the parlor. A gentle smile was playing on her lips when the door was opened and they entered. With an air of quiet content she looked at her sisters, who were standing by the side of their betrothed, and had been waiting for her with trembling impatience.

“There is no hope left,” murmured Lydia; “she accepts her fate, too, and submits.”

“She follows my example,” thought Esther; “she consoles herself with her wealth and brilliant position in society. Indeed, there is no better consolation than that.”

At that moment the door opened, and the rabbi in his black robe, a skull-cap on his head, appeared on the threshold, followed by the precentor and sexton. Solemn silence ensued, and all heads were lowered in prayer while the rabbi was crossing the room in order to salute the parents of the brides.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARIANNE MEIER.

At that moment of silent devotion, no one took any notice of a lady who crossed the threshold a few seconds after the rabbi had entered. She was a tall, superb creature of wonderful beauty. Her black hair, her glowing eyes, her finely-curved nose, the whole shape of her face imparted to her some resemblance to Fanny Itzig, the banker's beautiful daughter, and indicated that she belonged likewise to the people who, scattered over the whole world, have with unshaken fidelity and constancy preserved everywhere their type and habits. And yet, upon examining the charming stranger somewhat more closely, it became evident that she bore no resemblance either to Fanny or to her sisters. Hers was a strange and peculiar style of beauty, irresistibly attractive and chilling at the same time—a tall, queenly figure, wrapped in a purple velvet dress,

fastened under her bosom by a golden sash. Her shoulders, dazzling white, and of a truly classical shape, were bare; her short ermine mantilla had slipped from them and hung gracefully on her beautiful, well-rounded arms, on which magnificent diamond bracelets were glittering. Her black hair fell down in long, luxuriant ringlets on both sides of her transparent, pale cheeks, and was fastened in a knot by means of several large diamond pins. A diamond of the most precious brilliants crowned her high and thoughtful forehead.

She looked as proud and glorious as a queen, and there was something haughty, imperious, and cold in the glance with which she now slowly and searchingly surveyed the large room.

"Tell me," whispered Baron Arnstein, bending over Fanny Itzig, "who is the beautiful lady now standing near the door?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Fanny, joyfully, "she has come after all. We scarcely dared to hope for her arrival. It is Marianne Meier."

"What! Marianne Meier?" asked Baron Arnstein. "The celebrated beauty whom Goethe has loved—for whom the Swedish ambassador at Berlin, Baron Bernstein, has entertained so glowing a passion, and suffered so much—and who is now the mistress of the Austrian minister, the Prince von Reuss?"

"Hush, for Heaven's sake, hush!" whispered Fanny. "She is coming toward us."

And Fanny went to meet the beautiful lady. Marianne gently inclined her head and kissed Fanny with the dignified bearing of a queen.

"I have come to congratulate you and your sisters," she said, in a sonorous, magnificent alto voice. "I wanted to see how beautiful you looked, and whether your betrothed was worthy of possessing you or not."

Fanny turned round to beckon Baron Arnstein to join them, but he had just left with the rabbi and the other officers of the synagogue.

The ladies were now alone, for the ceremony was about to begin. And now the women entered, whose duty it was to raise loud lamentations and weep over the fate of the brides who were about to leave the parental roof and to follow their husbands. They spread costly carpets at the feet of the brides, who were sitting on arm-chairs among the assembled ladies, and strewing flowers on these carpets, they muttered, sobbing and weeping, ancient Hebrew hymns. The mother stood behind them with trembling lips, and, raising her tearful eyes toward heaven. The door was opened, and the sexton in a long robe, his white beard flowing down on his breast, appeared, carrying in his hand a white cushion with three splendid lace veils. He was followed by Mr. Itzig, the father of the three brides. Tak-

ing the veils from the cushion, and muttering prayers all the while, he laid them on the heads of his daughters so that their faces and bodies seemed to be surrounded by a thin and airy mist. And the mourning-women sobbed, and two tears rolled over the pale cheeks of the deeply-moved mother. The two men withdrew silently, and the ladies were alone again.

But now, in the distance, the heart-stirring sounds of a choir of sweet, sonorous children's voices were heard. How charming did these voices reëcho through the room! They seemed to call the brides, and, as if fascinated by the inspiring melody, they slowly rose from their seats. Their mother approached the eldest sister and offered her hand to her. Two of the eldest ladies took the hands of the younger sisters. The other ladies and the mourning-women formed in pairs behind them, and then the procession commenced moving in the direction of the inviting notes of the anthem. Thus they crossed the rooms—nearer and nearer came the music—and finally, on passing through the last door, the ladies stepped into a long hall, beautifully decorated with flowers and covered with a glass roof through which appeared the deep, transparent azure of the wintry sky. In the centre of this hall there arose a purple canopy with golden tassels. The rabbi, praying and with uplifted hands, was standing under it with the three bridegrooms. The choir of the singers, hidden behind flowers and orange-trees, grew louder and louder, and to this jubilant music the ladies conducted the brides to the canopy, and the ceremony commenced.

When it was concluded, when the veils were removed from the heads of the brides so that they could now look freely into the world, the whole party returned to the parlor, and brides and bridegrooms received the congratulations of their friends.

Fanny and Marianne Meier were chatting in a bay-window at some distance from the rest of the company. They were standing there, arm in arm—Fanny in her white bridal costume, like a radiant lily, and Marianne in her purple dress, resembling the peerless queen of flowers.

"You are going to leave Berlin to-day with your husband?" asked Marianne.

"We leave in an hour," said Fanny, sighing.

Marianne had heard this sigh. "Do you love your husband?" she asked, hastily.

"I have seen him only twice," whispered Fanny.

A sarcastic smile played on Marianne's lips. "Then they have simply sold you to him like a slave-girl to a wealthy planter," she said. "It was a mere bargain and sale, and still you boast of it, and pass your disgusting trade in human hearts for virtue, and believe

you have a right to look proudly and contemptuously down upon those who refuse to be sold like goods, and who prefer to give away their love to being desecrated without love."

"I do not boast of having married without love," said Fanny, gently. "Oh, I should willingly give up wealth and splendor—I should be quite ready to live in poverty and obscurity with a man whom I loved."

"But first the old rabbi would have to consecrate your union with such a man, I suppose?—otherwise you would not follow him, notwithstanding your love?" asked Marianne.

"Yes, Marianne, that would be indispensable," said Fanny, gravely, firmly fixing her large eyes upon her friend. "No woman should defy the moral laws of the world, or if she does, she will always suffer for it. If I loved and could not possess the man of my choice, if I could not belong to him as his wedded wife, I should give him up. The grief would kill me, perhaps, but I should die with the consolation of having remained faithful to virtue—"

"And of having proved false to love!" exclaimed Marianne, scornfully. "Phrases! Nothing but phrases learned by heart, my child, but the world boasts of such phrases, and calls such sentiments moral! Oh, hush! hush! I know what you are going to say, and how you wish to admonish me. I heard very well how contemptuously your husband called me the mistress of the Prince von Reuss. Don't excuse him, and don't deny it, for I have heard it. I might reply to it what Madame de Balbi said the other day upon being upbraided with being the mistress of the Royal Prince d'Artois: '*Le sang des princes ne souille pas!*' But I do not want to excuse myself; on the contrary, all of you shall some day apologize to me. For I tell you, Fanny, I am pursuing my own path and have a peculiar aim steadfastly in view. Oh, it is a great, a glorious aim. I want to see the whole world at my feet; all those ridiculous prejudices of birth, rank, and virtue shall bow to the Jewess, and the Jewess shall become the peer of the most distinguished representatives of society. See, Fanny, that is my plan and my aim, and it is yours too; we are only pursuing it in different ways—you, by the side of a man whose wife you are, and to whom you have pledged at the altar love and fidelity *without* feeling them; I, by the side of a man whose friend I am—to whom, it is true, I have not pledged at the altar love and fidelity, but whom I shall faithfully love *because* I have given my heart to him. Let God decide whose is the true morality. The world is on your side and condemns me, but some day I shall hurl back into its teeth all its contempt and scorn, and I shall compel it to bow most humbly to me."

"And whosoever sees you in your proud, radiant beauty, must

feel that you will succeed in accomplishing what you are going to undertake," said Fanny, bending an admiring glance on the glorious creature by her side.

Marianne nodded gratefully. "Let us pursue our aim," she said, "for it is one and the same. Both of us have a mission to fulfil, Fanny; we have to avenge the Jewess upon the pride of the Christian women; we have to prove to them that we are their equals in every respect, that we are perhaps better, more accomplished, and talented than all of those haughty Christian women. How often did they neglect and insult us in society! How often did they offensively try to eclipse us! How often did they vex us by their scorn and insolent bearing! We will pay it all back to them; we will scourge them with the scourges with which they have scourged us, and compel them to bow to us!"

"They shall at least consider and treat us as their equals," said Fanny, gravely. "I am not longing for revenge, but I want to hold my place in society, and to prove to them that I am just as well-bred and aristocratic a lady, and have an equal, nay, a better right to call myself a representative of true nobility; for ours is a more ancient nobility than that of all these Christian aristocrats, and we can count our ancestors farther back into the most remote ages than they—our fathers, the proud Levites, having been high-priests in Solomon's temple, and the people having treated them as noblemen even at that time. We will remind the Christian ladies of this whenever they talk to us about their own ancestors, who, at best, only date back to the middle ages or to Charlemagne."

"That is right. I like to hear you talk in this strain," exclaimed Marianne, joyfully. "I see you will represent us in Vienna in a noble and proud manner, and be an honor to the Jews of Berlin. Oh, I am so glad, Fanny, and I shall always love you for it. And do not forget me either. If it pleases God, I shall some day come to Vienna, and play there a brilliant part. However, we shall never be rivals, but always friends. Will you promise it?"

"I promise it," said Fanny, giving her soft white hand to her friend. Marianne pressed it warmly.

"I accept your promise and shall remind you of it some day," she said. "But now farewell, Fanny, for I see your young husband yonder, who would like to speak to you, and yet does not come to us for fear of coming in contact with the mistress of the Prince von Reuss. God bless and protect his virtue, that stands in such nervous fear of being infected! Farewell; don't forget our oath, and remember me."

She tenderly embraced her friend and imprinted a glowing kiss upon her forehead, and then quickly turning around, walked across

the room. All eyes followed the tall, proud lady with admiring glances, and some whispered, "How beautiful she is! How proud, how glorious!" She took no notice, however: she had so often received the homage of these whispers, that they could no longer gladden her heart. Without saluting any one, her head proudly erect, she crossed the room, drawing her ermine mantilla closely around her shoulders, and deeming every thing around her unworthy of notice.

In the anteroom a footman in gorgeous livery was waiting for her. He hastened down-stairs before her, opened the street door, and rushed out in order to find his mistress's carriage among the vast number of coaches encumbering both sides of the street, and then bring it to the door.

Marianne stood waiting in the door, stared at by the inquisitive eyes of the large crowd that had gathered in front of the house to see the guests of the wealthy banker Itzig upon their departure from the wedding.

Marianne paid no attention whatever to these bystanders. Her large black eyes swept over all those faces before her with an air of utter indifference; she took no interest in any one of them, and their impertinent glances made apparently no impression upon her.

But the crowd took umbrage at her queenly indifference.

"Just see," the bystanders whispered here and there, "just see the proud Jewess! How she stares at us, as if we were nothing but thin air! What splendid diamonds she has got! Wonder if she is indebted for them to her father's usury?"

On hearing this question, that was uttered by an old woman in rags, the whole crowd laughed uproariously. Marianne even then took no notice. She only thought that her carriage was a good while coming up, and the supposed slowness of her footman was the sole cause of the frown which now commenced clouding her brow. When the crowd ceased laughing, a woman, a Jewess, in a dirty and ragged dress, stepped forth and placed herself close to Marianne.

"You think she is indebted to her father for those diamonds!" she yelled. "No, I know better, and can tell you all about it. Her father was a good friend of mine, and frequently traded with me when he was still a poor, peddling Jew. He afterward made a great deal of money, while I grew very poor; but he never bought her those diamonds. Just listen to me, and I will tell you what sort of a woman she is who now looks down on us with such a haughty air. She is the Jewess Marianne Meier, the mistress of the old Prince von Reuss!"

"Ah, a mistress!" shouted the crowd, sneeringly. "And she is looking at us as though she were a queen. She wears diamonds in

her hair, and wants to hide her shame by dressing in purple velvet. She—"

At that moment the carriage rolled up to the door; the footman obsequiously opened the coach door and hastened to push back the crowd in order to enable Marianne to walk over the carpet spread out on the sidewalk to her carriage.

"We won't be driven back!" roared the crowd; "we want to see the beautiful mistress—we want to see her close by."

And laughing, shouting, and jeering, the bystanders crowded closely around Marianne. She walked past them, proud and erect, and did not seem to hear the insulting remarks that were being levelled at her. Only her cheeks had turned even paler than before, and her lips were quivering a little.

Now she had reached her carriage and entered. The footman closed the door, but the mob still crowded around the carriage, and looked through the glass windows, shouting, "Look at her! look at her! What a splendid mistress she is! Hurrah for her! Long live the mistress!"

The coachman whipped the horses, and the carriage commenced moving, but it could make but little headway, the jeering crowd rolling along with it like a huge black wave, and trying to keep it back at every step.

Marianne sat proudly erect in her carriage, staring at the mob with flaming and disdainful eyes. Not a tear moistened her eyes; not a word, not a cry issued from her firmly-compressed lips. Even when her carriage, turning around the corner, gained at last a free field and sped away with thundering noise, there was no change whatever in her attitude, or in the expression of her countenance. She soon reached the embassy buildings. The carriage stopped in front of the vestibule, and the footman opened the coach door. Marianne alighted and walked slowly and proudly to the staircase. The footman hastened after her, and when she had just reached the first landing-place he stood behind her and whispered:

"I beg your pardon, madame; I was really entirely innocent. Your carriage being the last to arrive, it had to take the hindmost place; that was the reason why it took us so long to get it to the door. I beg your pardon, madame."

Marianne only turned to him for a moment, bending a single contemptuous glance upon him, and then, without uttering a word, continued ascending the staircase.

The footman paused and looked after the proud lady, whispering with a sigh—

"She will discharge me—she never forgives!"

Marianne had now reached the upper story, and walked down

the corridor as slowly and as proudly as ever. Her valet stood at the door, receiving her with a profound bow, while opening the folding door. She crossed gravely and silently the long suite of rooms now opening before her, and finally entered her dressing-room. Her two lady's maids were waiting for her here in order to assist her in putting on a more comfortable dress.

When they approached their mistress, she made an imperious, repelling gesture.

"Begone!" she said, "begone!"

That was all she said, but it sounded like a scream of rage and pain, and the lady's maids hastened to obey, or rather to escape. When the door had closed behind them, Marianne rushed toward it and locked it, and drew the heavy curtain over it.

Now she was alone—now nobody could see her, nobody could hear her. With a wild cry she raised her beautiful arms, tore the splendid diadem of brilliants from her hair, and hurled it upon the floor. She then with trembling hands loosened the golden sash from her tapering waist, and the diamond pins from her hair, and threw all these precious trinkets disdainfully upon the floor. And now with her small feet, with her embroidered silken shoes, she furiously stamped on them with flaming eyes, and in her paroxysm of anger slightly opening her lips, so as to show her two rows of peerless teeth which she held firmly pressed together.

Her fine hair, no longer fastened by the diamond pins, had fallen down, and was now floating around her form like a black veil, and closely covered her purple dress. Thus she looked like a goddess of vengeance, so beautiful, so proud, so glorious and terrible—her small hands raised toward heaven, and her feet crushing the jewelry.

"Insulted, scorned!" she murmured. "The meanest woman on the street believes she has a right to despise me—me, the celebrated Marianne Meier—me, at whose feet counts and princes have sighed in vain! And who am I, then, that they should dare to despise me?"

She asked this question with a defiant, burning glance toward heaven, but all at once she commenced trembling, and hung her head humbly and mournfully.

"I am a disgraced woman," she whispered. "Diamonds and velvet do not hide my shame. I am the prince's mistress. That's all!"

"But it shall be so no longer!" she exclaimed, suddenly. "I will put a stop to it. I *must* put a stop to it! This hour has decided my destiny and broken my stubbornness. I thought I could defy the world in *my* way. I believed I could laugh at its prejudices; but the world is stronger than I, and therefore I have to submit, and shall hereafter defy it in its own way. And I shall do so most assuredly. I shall do so on the spot."

Without reflecting any further, she left her chamber and hastened once more through the rooms. Her hair now was waving wildly around her shoulders, and her purple dress, no longer held together by the golden sash, was floating loosely around her form.

She took no notice whatever of her *dishabille*; only one idea, only one purpose filled her heart.

In breathless haste she hurried on, and now quickly opened a last door, through which she entered a room furnished in the most sumptuous and comfortable manner.

At her appearance, so sudden, and evidently unexpected, the elderly gentleman, who had reposed on the silken sofa, arose and turned around with a gesture of displeasure.

On recognizing Marianne, however, a smile overspread his features, and he went to meet her with a pleasant greeting.

"Back already, dearest?" he said, extending his hand toward her.

"Yes, your highness—I am back already," she said drily and coldly.

The gentleman upon whose features the traces of a life of dissipation were plainly visible, fixed his eyes with an anxious air upon the beautiful lady. He only now noticed her angry mien and the strange *dishabille* in which she appeared before him.

"Good Heaven, Marianne!" he asked, sharply, "what is the cause of your agitation, of your coldness toward me? What has happened to you?"

"What has happened to me? The most infamous insults have been heaped upon my head!" she exclaimed with quivering lips, an angry blush suffusing her cheeks. "For a quarter of an hour, nay, for an eternity, I was the target of the jeers, the contempt, and the scorn of the rabble that publicly abused me in the most disgraceful manner!"

"Tell me," exclaimed the old gentleman, "what has occurred, and whose fault it was!"

"Whose fault it was?" she asked, bending a piercing glance upon him. "*Yours*, my prince; you alone are to blame for my terrible disgrace and humiliation. For your sake the rabble has reviled me, called me your mistress, and laughed at my diamonds; calling them the reward of my shame! Oh, how many insults, how many mortifications have I not already suffered for your sake—with how many bloody tears have I not cursed this love which attaches me to you, and which I was nevertheless unable to tear from my heart, for it is stronger than myself. But now the cup of bitterness is full to overflowing. My pride cannot bear so much contumely and scorn. Farewell, my prince, my beloved! I must leave you. I cannot stay

with you any longer. Shame would kill me. Farewell! Hereafter, no one shall dare to call me a mistress."

With a last glowing farewell, she turned to the door, but the prince kept her back. "Marianne," he asked, tenderly, "do you not know that I love you, and that I cannot live without you?"

She looked at him with a fascinating smile. "And I?" she asked, "far from you, shall die of a broken heart; with you, I shall die of shame. I prefer the former. Farewell! No one shall ever dare again to call me by that name." And her hand touched already the door-knob.

The prince encircled her waist with his arms and drew her back.

"I shall not let you go," he said, ardently. "You are mine, and shall remain so! Oh, why are you so proud and so cold? Why will you not sacrifice your faith to our love? Why do you insist upon remaining a Jewess?"

"Your highness," she said, leaning her head on his shoulder, "why do you want me to become a Christian?"

"Why?" he exclaimed. "Because my religion and the laws of my country prevent me from marrying a Jewess."

"And if I should sacrifice to you the last that has remained to me?" she whispered—"my conscience and my religion."

"Marianne," he exclaimed, solemnly, "I repeat to you what I have told you so often already: 'Become a Christian in order to become my wife.'"

She encircled his neck impetuously with her arms and clung to him with a passionate outburst of tenderness. "I will become a Christian!" she whispered.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE AND POLITICS.

"At last! at last!" exclaimed Gentz, in a tone of fervid tenderness, approaching Marianne, who went to meet him with a winning smile. "Do you know, dearest, that you have driven me to despair for a whole week? Not a word, not a message from you! Whenever I came to see you, I was turned away. Always the same terrible reply, 'Madame is not at home,' while I felt your nearness in every nerve and vein of mine, and while my throbbing heart was under the magic influence of your presence. And then to be turned away! No reply whatever to my letters, to my ardent prayers to see you only for a quarter of an hour."

"Oh, you ungrateful man!" she said, smiling, "did I not send for you to-day? Did I not give you this rendezvous quite voluntarily?"

"You knew very well that I should have died if your heart had not softened at last. Oh, heavenly Marianne, what follies despair made me commit already! In order to forget you, I plunged into all sorts of pleasures, I commenced new works, I entered upon fresh love-affairs. But it was all in vain. Amidst those pleasures I was sad; during my working hours my mind was wandering, and in order to impart a semblance of truth and tenderness to my protestations of love, I had to close my eyes and imagine *you* were the lady whom I was addressing."

"And then you were successful?" asked Marianne, smiling.

"Yes, then I was successful," he said, gravely; "but my new lady-love, the beloved of my distraction and despair, did not suspect that I only embraced her so tenderly because I kissed in her the beloved of my heart and of my enthusiasm."

"And who was the lady whom you call the beloved of your distraction and despair?" asked Marianne.

"Ah, Marianne, you ask me to betray a woman?"

"No, no; I am glad to perceive that you are a discreet cavalier. You shall betray no woman. I will tell you her name. The beloved of your distraction and despair was the most beautiful and charming lady in Berlin—it was the actress Christel Enghaus. Let me compliment you, my friend, on having triumphed with that belle over all those sentimental, lovesick princes, counts, and barons. Indeed, you have improved your week of 'distraction and despair' in the most admirable manner."

"Still, Marianne, I repeat to you, she was merely my sweetheart for the time being, and I merely plunged into this adventure in order to forget you."

"Then you love me really?" asked Marianne.

"Marianne, I adore you! You know it. Oh, now I may tell you so. Heretofore you repelled me and would not listen to my protestations of love because I was a *married* man. Now, however, I have got rid of my ignominious fetters, Marianne; now I am no longer a married man. I am free, and all the women in the world are at liberty to love me. I am as free as a bird in the air!"

"And like a bird you want to flit from one heart to another?"

"No, most beautiful, most glorious Marianne; your heart shall be the cage in which I shall imprison myself."

"Beware, my friend. What would you say if there was no door in this cage through which you might escape?"

"Oh, if it had a door, I should curse it."

"Then you love me so boundlessly as to be ready to sacrifice to me the liberty you have scarcely regained?"